10: d'Orleans--314 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 771, 821

"In addition to the respect felt for spirits, it would seem as if the worship of nature and its forces is still preserved, for honour is paid to the moon, the women going about the streets shouting at each change of quarter. Guns and salvoes are also fired during the eclipses, at which periods the people say that 'the moon is eaten up,' without seeking for any other explanation of the phenomenon."

10: d'Orleans--325 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 316, 346, 532, 821

[LSS: in Luang Prabang] "When we land on the left bank, we notice a number of people stooping down, with their feet in the water, engaged in washing out the sand; these are gold finders, who earn but a scanty living, though they sometimes come upon an old coin or two which has been washed down stream. A climb of about fifty feet up decrepit steps, which in summer are under water, brings us to the town. Close upon the left is a small pagoda, Ouate Poune Saï, which is only remarkable for the fresco above the entrance gate, this representing Kop, the sun, eating the moon; in other words, the fresco is intended to designate an eclipse."

10: d'Orleans--346 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 782, 796, 821

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.] "April 12th
As we cross the stream, we notice all along the banks tiny rafts conveying presents, notably rice, and these are offerings made by the boatmen in order that they may take plenty of fish, and be favoured by the weather while out with their boats.

In the town the statues are still out in the open, or rather they are placed under a small scaffolding, the sacred water conduit pouring out its contents drop by drop through the dragon's mouth in which it terminates at one end, while the other end is in the pagoda and is being fed by the priests, long tapers with strips of paper bearing the donor's name are burning before the altar."

10: d'Orleans--366 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 821

"Our boatmen are amiable and reply willingly to our questions. In the evening, as the nights are superb, I question them on astronomy, and find that they know most of the constellations. The Great Bear they call the Elephant. The 'bands of Orion' go by the name of the Bow, because of the two small stars at the side which suggest an arrow. Venus is 'the star not loved by pigs' because, as they say, it is so bright that pigs do not eat when they see it."

643* merchandise).
648* His life was also a short one. He died at the age of thirty-three,
175* handing down the crown to an only son born two years after his accession to the throne.

SOM-PHOU (1488-1502), KING 1496-1501.

643* This child, Som-Phou, who gave only his name to his reign, was
175 removed from power by the ministers, for reasons unknown, when he reached the age of thirteen. He then died in the following year.

/71/ VISOUN (1467), KING 1501-1520.

643* His uncle Phé-Sai (1) was summoned to the throne in his place in
175

1. Next to the last son of Tiakaphat.

/821/ 1501. According to the Annals, the sky was streaked with lightning and thundered unceasingly on the coronation day. Struck by this phenomenon, in which they saw a manifestation of divine satisfaction, the Council of Ministers gave him the name of Phaya-Visoun (lightning).
/787/ In 1506 a son was born to him who was named Phothisarath in consequence of a dream which Visoun's mother had a few days before the queen's delivery. "Banyans in flower (Kok-Pho) had appeared to her in which innumerable birds warbled joyfully." When consulted, the priests predicted that the expected child would be a Saint, and in the royal family everyone rejoiced at the thought that the newborn would come into the world under the sign of the sacred tree in whose shade Buddha had attained the triple science and found the secret of the destinies.
346 In order to magnify in anticipation, so to speak, the marvelous
643* events of his reign, King Visoun built many temples around his palace.
175* /72/ The foundations of a pagoda which was erected under his auspices to the memory of a daughter who had died young can still be seen today in Luang-Prabang (1).

1. Another pagoda, "Posot-Luang," which was located on the present site of the ice-house, has completely disappeared. Great celebrations were held there in honor of the birth of Photisarath.

643* PHOTHISARATH (1506), KING 1520-1547.
His son Phothisarath, who succeeded him in 1520, was an extremely

643* Muong-Bo road and took a stand before the latter village. But a
648* disagreement resulting from long-standing rivalry sprang up between
175* the commander of the Xieng-Khouang troops, An-Om, and one of his officers who negotiated with Vientiane and thereby caused a retreat to the capital through the valley of the Nam-Nhiep.

Pressed from all sides, An-Om could not defend /150/ Xieng-Khouang, and Ong-Long's columns entered into it without firing a shot while King Xom-Phou fled along the Muong-Khang road.

In the meantime the king of Annam, who had had word of the dispute, sent his two vassals a message urging them to lay down their arms. The king of Vientiane seemed to be the first to return to peaceful ideas. He had Tran-Ninh evacuated and invited Xom-Phou to come and visit him. The latter doubtless suspected a trap, and spent three years deciding to set out. His fears were not unfounded, for when he reached Som-Di he was suddenly assaulted by a hundred or so of Ong-Long's soldiers, who captured him and took him to Vientiane without any regard for his rank (1).

1. According to the Annals of Tran-Ninh, Xom-Phou was to be put to death as they descended the Nam-Lick, but "lightning broke the instrument of punishment in the executioner's hands and they did not dare to execute him."

/821/
/787/

He had been there for three years when Ong-Long received another message from the king of Annam blaming him for his conduct and ordering him to set Xom-Phou free immediately. He kept this ultimatum to himself, but hastened to begin negotiations for his prisoner's release with every appearance of generosity. The prince /151/ of Tran-Ninh promised tribute, and was finally allowed to return to his own land (1760) (1).

1. Xom-Phou kept his promise, and up until the time of his death came to do homage to the king of Vientiane every three years. The tribute from Xieng-Khouang then consisted of golden flowers weighing twenty ticals each, two horses with silver harness, a thousand swords made of native iron, a thousand brush knives, a thousand shovels, a thousand plowshares and selected foodstuffs. (Cf. de Pelacot, op. cit. /"Le Tran-Ninh historique," Revue indochinoise, Hanoi, 1896./)

It is, moreover, under the reign of Xom-Phou that the

779 thoughts of your previous life have been good. Thanks to these efforts you will pass successively, in your various incarnations, from the state of man to the state of holy man, then to that of saint and finally to that of Buddha or perfection, from which you will fall back into the mute and calm abyss, the void and eternal rest. Besides the constant effort of the will to raise itself, the good deeds which you accomplish will tend to the same purpose, whether they be deeds of action, of thought, of word or of intention.

"Anyone who, on the other hand, abandons himself to evil actions and makes no effort to raise himself gradually moves away from the state dreamed by Buddha, and his successive reincarnations occur in the opposite direction, descending into the bodies of animals which may be more or less maleficent and despicable.

"The above, however, are speculations to which the Laotian intelligence cannot rise. The Buddhist religion as practiced in Laos demands only a few outer signs of deference towards bonzes and holy places.

771 "Besides Buddhism, the Laotians have retained, or transformed
776 into a cult, certain Spirits or Genii whom they call Phis, the in-
782 numerable deities of the Brahminic Pantheon by which Buddhism was accompanied when it was imported into Laos and which have been reduced to a lesser stature.

"All the forces of nature, all that is capable of bringing disorder into life and every movement or phenomenon which the Laotian cannot explain is personified by a particular Genie or Spirit.

"The cult of these Phis may be summed up as follows: it is an interested exchange of gifts or sacrifices by men, in return for the goodwill, neutrality or help of the Phis. Oftentimes, when the Phi is not greatly dreaded, a bargain will be made with him which will be repaid after he has performed his part of the bargain. The cult of the Phis has a widespread following, and they have their lay priests who bear the title of guardians of the Genii.

771 "In addition to the cult of the Phis, which is nothing more nor
821 less than a form of polytheism, the Laotians are subject to rather numerous superstitions.

"Thus if an eclipse of the moon occurs Laotians imagine that a tiger is trying to devour it, and everyone at once begins to take turns banging on gongs, firing shots and using every means to make as much noise as possible so as to frighten off the aforesaid tiger and prevent it from swallowing the nocturnal star.

346 Pagodas are always built on ground which has been perfectly leveled, is quite extensive and is surrounded by a wooden palisade or brick wall of elbow height.

[485] Within the pagoda enclosures there are bonzeries and dependent structures to serve as quarters for the bonzes, schools for their pupils and hostelries for travelers.

735 The construction and upkeep of pagodas are entirely dependent on the generous liberality of the faithful. Thus these edifices can be used 346 as a criterion for discovering both the state of prosperity of a region and the religious faith of its inhabitants.

[778] As used to be the case for our churches, Laotian pagodas and even their enclosures are, according to the customs of the land, sanctuaries which confer immunity against legal prosecution for certain crimes and misdemeanors.

[527] It is also in the enclosure and sometimes under the cloisters and verandas of the pagodas that the inhabitants gather on the legal holidays, and also private holidays, which are known as "Ngans".

844 Childbirth. Dr. Estrade describes the delivery of a woman of southern Laos as follows. The preliminaries, the operation itself and post-delivery procedure are the same, with only slight differences in detail, in northern Laos, and we may therefore quote Dr. Estrade's description as applicable to all of Laos in general.

"Childbirth never takes place in the house inhabited by the pregnant woman or her direct relatives, but always in the home of a neighbor or distant relative who gives hospitality to the patient until she is up and about again. The duration of pregnancy is counted in moons, as in all calculations of time, the moon being the essential element for the Laotian in the measurement of time and the occurrence 777 of a great many phenomena. When a woman reaches the last moon of her pregnancy she takes certain precautions all tending to delay • 824 delivery until the first phase of the new moon, since births during the last phases are signs of misfortune [189] such as the death of the child, deformity, etc. These prejudices have such force that parents are [782] careless in caring for any child born during the last phases of the moon, and in such a case all of their effort goes into prayers, offerings to the bonzes and the making of votive offerings (1)

(1) This assertion should not, however, be taken too literally or in any general sense. This is a prejudice which is kept up by the bonzes in their own self-interest, and is easy to see through. (Author's note.)

323 The potters' methods and equipment do not differ from those which are in widespread use everywhere.

The method of firing depends on the nature of the article, and firing may be done either in kilns dug out of the clay soil, in the banks of watercourses, or under stacks of rice straw. Wood or rice straw is used to fire the kilns.

In some regions articles are given a shiny black patina resembling graphite by firing them for a second time in paddy husks.

326 778 411 415 Brass-founding. One has only to explore the pagodas of Laos in order to realize that brass-founding used to be held in honor. Religious statues can be found which are sometimes of great [458] weight and usually of quite fine workmanship and taste, taking into account, to be sure, the quite special manner in which they conceive esthetics.

Although the crucibles have not been fired for many long years for casting such large pieces, the industry of brass-founding continues to be exercised by a certain number of specialists who are content with producing religious statuettes, necessities for betel, bells for elephants and livestock, various kinds of vases, cuspidors, etc.

This industry is an extremely ancient one in the land. It was certainly practiced during the Bronze Age, as is attested by the spear-heads, daggers, hatchets and halberds which have been found in northern Laos and which can now be seen in the Saint-Germain museum.

[821 172] It is interesting to note that the inhabitants of Laos attribute a meteoric origin to objects of the Bronze Age, as also to those of the Age of Polished Stone. They believe that these objects fall from the sky when it thunders, and that they are produced by lightning.

The following are some of the methods used by Laotian founders. Casting is always done by the lost wax process.

325 532 Casting statues. On an initial rough clay model, the artist applies a layer of fine, soft and well-pugged clay which he shapes in a more careful manner. Then after covering the statue, which is already much more than a rough draft, with a layer of bees-wax of the proper thickness, he finishes modeling the statue on the wax, inserting all the details and all the ornaments which it is to include. Polishing a bit here, engraving there, setting precious stones or simply glass between the eyelids to represent eyes, and inserting gold lips where the mouth is to be located, he gives the